

School Visitation Reflection:

- Due no later than Friday, 11/30 – you may submit this early if you wish.
- Completion of this experience and the accompanying report counts 20% of your semester grade.
- Your paper will not be shared with your observation teacher.

This typewritten paper should be 5-7 pages. This is an opportunity to reflect on your experiences and insights regarding observing, tutoring, and teaching in a classroom. Your written notes should be helpful here. This paper is not intended as a mere recounting of events (... *she said this, so I said that, etc ...*) but instead, a thoughtful reflection on what you gained from this experience, your pre-conceived expectations and the reality of what happened, and your successes and perhaps failures. However, it should be clear to the reader what happened during lesson, what the material taught was and what the outcomes were. It may be helpful to at least make an audio recording of the lesson.

Your reflection should include:

- A summary (no more than one page) of the classroom environment: course and teacher, class size, topics taught during your observations, teaching methods observed (did they vary from lecture format?), such as small-group activities, board work, student worksheets at desks, etc.
- Observation phase: This aspect of your visits was most likely brief. You probably began with a few assumptions about your pupils, their prerequisite understanding of certain mathematical principles and ideas, and their general capabilities to “catch on” to new topics. How well did you assess their preparation for these lessons? Were pupils generally able to grasp the new material or did they seem to get lost easily? What evidence supports your conclusions? What about the level of instruction? Was it generally at the level that you had expected? At a higher or lower level? How did your perceptions change during the observation phase? What would you say was most noticeable about the willingness of students to participate in classroom discussions? What did the teacher do to encourage participation? Give examples to support your conclusions.

Use the following points in talking about your own teaching as well as your cooperating teacher:

Examine teacher’s performance using course materials (rubrics, handouts, class notes, papers read, other papers from professional journals). This examination should be clear about the purpose of the activity and about the moves the teacher made. The examination should point to valuable things done and their justification or to things that should not have been done and their justification.

Conjecture how teacher’s decisions and moves may have influenced student learning and discuss any piece of evidence they have for that. This piece needs to be specific. Note if the teacher made a decision that opened up or curtailed students’ opportunities for learning. Note if comments from students made it apparent that they understood or did not understand what the teacher was teaching.

Discuss problematic moves teacher made when performing the activity and suggest what they could have done instead, then make conjectures as to how doing things differently might have made a difference as regards to student learning. Again, this should be specific. We are not necessarily looking for general alternatives (e.g. alternative arrangements of the class in groups or whole class) but alternative instructional decisions and moves that might have an effect in students learning of the subject matter.

- Tutoring phase: You most likely went into this phase quickly. What were the primary difficulties with mathematics that your students seemed to have? What surprises did you encounter? Your tutoring experiences at the school may have been in settings outside the classroom with time for you to reflect on lessons on specific topics ahead of time. Or, they may have occurred spontaneously as you moved about the classroom. If you had time to prepare organized lessons, did you find that you were able to use this time effectively? Explain. Did you try to coordinate lessons with the textbook or handouts, or was it easier to take a different approach? How did you get students engaged in your tutoring lessons? What teaching methods did you use other than lecture and worksheets?
- Classroom teaching phase: In at least one of these lessons you are expected to display a serious attempt to accomplish the following activities of teaching:

- explain a new mathematical concept or procedure
- lead and sustain a mathematical discussion after having had students work on a problem where they were to encounter something new.

Depending on how many teaching opportunities you have, you may use them to improve upon one of these (for example if what happened in one of the previous lessons or if the quality of the records you kept did not really give you a chance to write a good description and critique) you may choose to do an activity for a second time. If you are comfortable with what you did in the first time, use the others to practice another of the activities learned in the course.

- Describe your classroom teaching assignments. Did you make use of teacher suggestions on how to teach certain topics, or were you “left to your own devices”? Were the teacher’s lesson plans employed? Were these helpful? Explain. If you could do this again, what would you change and why? Students will sketch alternative moves they could have made when carrying out activities of teaching and the possible effects that those alternative moves could have had in student learning and participation in mathematical work. Students will set at least five specific goals for the future development of mathematics teaching skills and sketch plans for them to accomplish those goals during the student teaching semester.
- Finally, reflect on how you think student understanding of mathematics changed due to your efforts and why you think so. What evidence supports this?

Whereas we expect you to apply yourself in teaching each of the lessons, you are not expected to be totally successful or perfect in those performances yet. Consequently your description should be honest and open for inspection rather than self justificatory. You will not be graded on the basis of how well you taught but on the basis of how well you describe and examine the way you taught—how you use course materials (especially the rubrics) and readings as well as your records to think about your teaching and how you plan your development as a teacher.